

* **Send Doug an email with the number of parent conferences you had Thursday night in the subject line. Send another email with the number seen Friday morning—I need to keep the numbers separated. Thanks.**
* **Send Doug an email with the names of the gifted students you talked about in your TBT next week (see email from 3-3-11).**
* **In service agenda for Monday is at the end of the memo.**

Current Research and Information—

# 6. Using Wiki-Based Literature Circles to Teach Middle-School Novels

            In this thoughtful article in *Middle Ground*, Michigan 8th-grade teacher Monica Anne Mansfield describes her dissatisfaction with the time-honored practice of teaching one novel to the whole class. It wasn’t working that well, especially for struggling readers, but Mansfield had several worries about moving to a more differentiated approach like literature circles. She liked the idea of students collaborating in small groups as they discussed their book’s events, characters, and plot, the author’s style, and how they perceived and reacted to the book. But would classroom management suffer? Would students stay engaged? Would they master state standards? And would there be enough materials and planning time?

            Mansfield decided to take the plunge with her science fiction unit – and added another dimension: having students participate in literature circles via an online wiki. She began with a survey of students’ familiarity with the genre, their personal interests, and their level of confidence reading science fiction. The survey included short passages from four science-fiction books chosen for interest level, challenging content, and a variety of difficulty levels:

-   *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells

-   *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L’Engle

-   *The House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer

-   *Anthem* by Ayn Rand (the shortest and most accessible to struggling students).

Mansfield asked students to rank-order their preference and used the responses – and students’ reading levels – to assign each student to a book group.

            She then set up a basic wiki homepage for each book group, with links to additional discussion pages for each chapter and a resource page with discussion suggestions to support students who might have difficulty contributing to their group’s discussion. Students visited the computer lab every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to read and post comments to the wiki. Because only one person could make changes to a wiki page at a time, Madison scheduled students from different class periods in groups together, which helped manage the number of people trying to post to a single page. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, students were back in Mansfield’s classroom and read independently, conferred with group members, or met with her. They used sticky notes to jot down ideas, questions, and connections they made as they read and referred to them when they posted comments to the wiki.

Students immediately liked the new format, eagerly looking forward to reading and contributing each wiki day and initiating and managing lively discussions about their books. Some students contributed comments from home and other locations where they could get Web access. “The wiki fostered an environment of accountability, promoted peer collaboration, and provided students time for thoughtful reflection that is not always feasible in face-to-face discussion,” says Mansfield. “Unlike the whole-class novel study, the wiki was student-centered and engaging… The student-centered approach supported by the wiki legitimized students’ questions, concerns, and interests. Students were committed as they worked together to understand the events of the novels and create deeper meaning by making connections to their lives and the world.” All students took to the new format, including those with a record of low grades, poor attendance, and discipline problems.

As the unit progressed, Mansfield had all students do a common set of activities (tailored to their book) and provided extension activities to challenge advanced readers. At the end of the unit, all students took the same final test with questions specific to their novel. Mansfield was thrilled with the results: overall, students did 14 percentage points better than they had on a conventional whole-class novel unit earlier in the year. The biggest gains came among struggling students and boys, many of whom improved their scores 20-35 percentage points.

Mansfield says that the wiki-based format was a major shift in her teaching style. “It challenged me to relinquish control of classroom activities and to empower students to pursue their own concerns, questions, and connections as they explored a variety of texts within and across class periods,” she says. “Most important, technology enabled me to manage the activities of multiple groups and individuals while attending to the needs of diverse learners.”

“Using Wikis to Differentiate Instruction in Literature Circles” by Monica Anne Mansfield in *Middle Ground*, February 2011 (Vol. 14, #3, p. 16-17)

<http://www.nmsa.org/Publications/MiddleGround/Articles/February2011/tabid/2326/Default.aspx>

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# 5. Improving Secondary Students’ Use of Academic Vocabulary

            In this *Principal Leadership* article, San Diego State University professors Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey emphasize the importance of academic vocabulary for secondary-school students – not just memorizing lists of words, but students reading, writing, speaking, and listening to key vocabulary in different contexts in all subject areas.

            For example, a world history teacher might ask students to use the word *pogroms* in a sentence at least eight words long, with *pogroms* in the fourth position. Students might produce sentences like these:

-   Russian czarists used *pogroms* to frighten Jewish activists.

-   Some people escaped *pogroms* by immigrating to other countries, such as the United States.

-   It’s easy for *pogroms* to turn into genocides.

The teacher might then have students read their sentences aloud and discuss the content and grammar. Every few days, students might look back in their history notebooks and choose one of their previous sentences to use as a topic sentence for a class summary they write on an exit ticket, allowing the teacher to gauge comprehension and zero in on students who need additional help.

            Another technique for getting students to learn academic vocabulary is language frames – partially-constructed sentences into which students insert their original ideas to get practice using formal language to explain, defend, and persuade. For example, an English teacher might have students flesh out language frames like these:

-   The evidence shows that -----.

-   I believe this because -----.

-   Ultimately, what I believe is ------.

-   I reached this conclusion because ------.

-   I would even add that --------.

A teacher could introduce language frames by modeling a sentence she might write after reading a mystery novel, and then have students read an article and complete their own sentences. When students get the hang of simple language frames, they can graduate to something more sophisticated, like this one:

-   I agree that ---, a point that needs emphasizing because so many people believe that ----. Using this frame, a student wrote, “I agree that happiness can be bought, a point that needs emphasizing because so many people believe that it is internal. Does the ease of transportation make you happy? What about the iPod you listen to?”

NASSP members can view a video of a teacher using language frames at

<http://www.principals.org/pl0211fisher>.

“Academic Language in the Secondary Classroom” by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey in *Principal Leadership*, February 2011 (Vol. 11, #6, p. 64-66), no e-link available; the authors can be reached at [dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu) and [nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu).

***FROM THE “DON’T FORGET” FILES:***

1. **Please check my wiki space at** <http://aviewfromtheknol.wikispaces.com/> **and check the discussion tab to interact with what is posted.**
2. **In order to better document parent contact we can now use Infinite Campus as a tool to record Student Study Team meetings, parent meetings, emails, phone conferences and all other methods of contact that should be documented. Use this method in place of any other phone logs or documentation.**

***“Search” tabs and find the student and click on the student’s name***

***“Index” tab and click on “Student Information”***

***“PLP” tab and click on “Contact Log” then click on “New Event”***

***Fill out the form and save.***

**The entry may be brief, highlight what was talked about and with whom; dates and times will be entered as you indicate. When you enter SST information, just write what was accomplished—the strategies/accommodations to be used; something very quick.**

***Important dates from the fig tree:***

* Budgets are due in my office March 18th.
* Faculty meeting march 24th.

8:00 to 9:45 Language Arts Curriculum work: Conference room

Math Curriculum work: 204

Science Curriculum work 202

Social Studies curriculum work 208

Exploratory Dept. meetings IMC

Special Education see group assignments

9:45 to 10:15 Wellness Activity of your choice: walking, treadmill, aerobic workout, open gym

10:30 to 12:00 AESOP Training Volm Theatre—all staff

1:00 to 1:45 Advanced Science Group meeting IMC: Dave, Lori, Todd, Chad, Doug

When finished, return to groups

1:00 to 1:45 SSA Facilitators Conference Room; when finished, return to

groups

1:00 to 3:00 Group will complete curriculum work started in the morning.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Math Group** | **Science Group** | **Lang. Arts Group** | **Soc. Stds. Group** | **Exploratory Group** |
| T. Wienke | T. Nuskiewicz | D. Knol | K. Kubacki | S. Farmer |
| Co. Harger | D. Hickman | D. Madison | J. Novak | H. McCann |
| Ch. Harger | T. Mayr | P. Woods | M. Umland | A. Weix |
| L. Flannery | E. Okray | J. Kirsch | R. Gut | T. Weix |
| L. Scherer | V. Gravitter | J. Fuehrer | L. Czerneski |  |
| C. Baumgart | J. Langseth | K. Raab |  | B. Ebel |
| J. Monk |  | L. Ourada |  | C. Martin |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | H. Hefner |
|  |  |  |  | D. Lodge |
|  |  |  |  | C. Schafer |
|  |  |  |  | J. Waterhouse |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | A. Darr |
|  |  |  |  | J. Olson |
|  |  |  |  | D. Moe |
|  |  |  |  | B. McFarlane |

Goals for the different groups:

Language Arts Review the CCSS for English and complete at least 5 activities.

Math Review local assessment results & MAP scores then prepare for final assessment in May.

Turn in copies of the local assessment test and copies of the pre-test results.

Science Review local assessment results & MAP scores then prepare for final assessment in May.

Turn in copies of the local assessment test and copies of the pre-test results.

Social Studies Review local assessment results & MAP scores then prepare for final assessment in May.

Turn in copies of the local assessment test and copies of the pre-test results.

PE/Health Review progress on the PEP grant with Tom and plan for the remainder of the school year using the PEP grant curriculum.

Art Work individually on curriculum for 6-7-8 grades

Explore. Rotation Work together to explore options for increasing the use of technology in the classroom. Write a short summary of activities, technology, web sites that staff can look at and use in his or her classroom.

Music Continue work on standards—turn in work when finished

All teachers Complete the CCSS form for what was taught this year—turn into Doug by the end of the 3rd quarter (March 31st).